Friday, October 26, 2007

(U//FOUO) Tips for a Successful Quick Reaction Capability

by ██

(U) Collaboration is a way to get the job done.

(TS//SI//NF) Collaboration is key when you are tasked with a high priority, labor-intensive project. When the Iran Government Branch (S2E41) and the Iran Leadership Branch (S2E43) were asked to participate in a Quick Reaction Capability (QRC) for Iranian President Ahmadi-Nejad's late September 2007 trip to New York, we went into action to coordinate an effective approach to the task. In our case, QRC meant a short-term increase in special collection to provide time-sensitive information to a defined customer set. Fortunately, we were not new to QRCs, and our experience has taught us the value of collaboration. ***We had learned the three most important tips for successfully carrying out a QRC: plan ahead, delegate, and share.***

(U) **Plan Ahead**

(TS//SI//NF) In response to the QRC request, we immediately began to coordinate across the division with the efforts of various other partner offices throughout the Agency as well as with other Intelligence Community agencies. To prepare, S2E41, S2E43, the BLARNEY office, and Tailored Access Operations began working with Oversight and Compliance and the Office of General Counsel to ready the necessary legal documents and obtain authorization for special FISA collection on the Iranian delegation during their stay in New York for the 62nd United Nations General Assembly.

(TS//SI//NF) Concurrently with obtaining the "ok" for the special collection, we had to ensure that the proper procedures would be in place to be able to efficiently tackle the anticipated influx of traffic. The Human Language Technology (HLT – S23) office provided numerous technologies to aid in the coverage:

- Speech Activity Detection was run on all incoming traffic to help identify cuts with little-to-no speech to prevent our having to listen to dead air.
- Speaker Identification was run to help pinpoint people of significant interest, including the Iranian Foreign Minister.
- VoiceRt phonetic keyword searches were developed and run to help uncover key target information, such as the passing of email addresses and discussion of prominent individuals.

(TS//SI//NF) One of the branch's senior language analysts, an Excel spreadsheet guru, put together a detailed list of all 143 delegates, including not only their names and positions in the Iranian government, but their passport numbers, dates of birth and more. In addition, she included the Iranian President's and Foreign Minister's schedules. Collection information and identifications of the various hotel rooms and cell phones were also updated as soon as they were discovered. The analyst kept it updated throughout the day and provided it to everyone involved with the QRC, including the FBI.

(TS//SI//REL TO USA, FVEY) Meanwhile, language analysts from S2E41, S2E43, and S23 combined forces to take on the challenges of the significantly increased collection. The voice language analysts relied on one senior voice language analyst who had a knack for finding the way to best organize the traffic using NUCLEON.

(U) **Delegate**

(TS//SI//REL TO USA, FVEY) With a limited number of resources and an abundance of traffic to scan, we had to find a way to divide the work so that nothing was missed or duplicated. We were scanning approximately 2000 voice cuts a day, so organization and delegation were key. The team chief created MORPHEON rules, shared queries, shared filters, and tabs to organize and search the voice traffic. The team agreed to divide the traffic by using the filters and creating tab groups in addition to using color-coding, and a limited set of NUCLEON dispositions, e.g., if the SRI (signal-related information) data for a voice cut was red, it meant "to do," and if blue it was "new," and if black it had "already been done." That way, no matter what query or filter a language analyst was using, everyone else could "see" what had been done and what was still left to do.

(TS//SI//REL TO USA, FVEY) Some analysts scanned and prioritized while others transcribed and gisted…everyone moved between the two jobs throughout the day as needed. This method made for very efficient scanning, which is paramount when five or six language analysts are working the same traffic at the same time.

(U) **Share**

(TS//SI//REL TO USA, FVEY) All the language analysts kept in contact throughout the day and passed on their findings, analyses and highlights via email, phone and often impromptu gatherings. With the group working extended hours, from 0400-2300, the last analyst to leave would gather together the highlights from that day's findings and share it with the other offices involved. Sharing was crucial because no two language analysts scanned the same traffic, so we had to collaborate in order to provide the most comprehensive information to the customers.
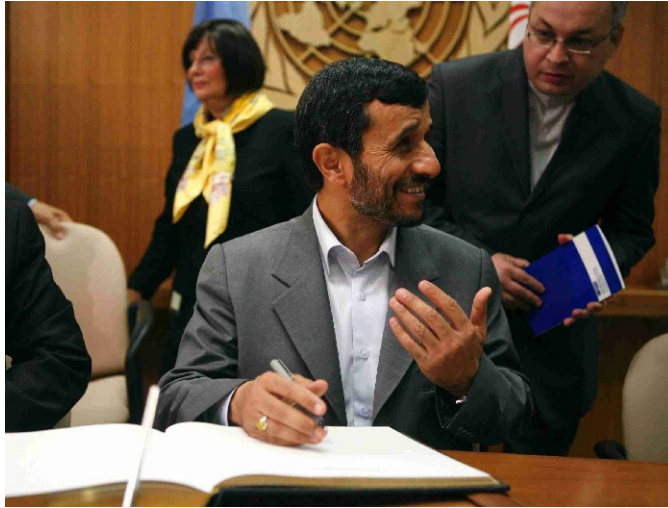
(U) The Iranian President signs a guest book at the UN, September 24, 2007 (Reuters)

(U) **Results**

(TS//SI//REL TO USA, FVEY) Our QRC efforts had several positive outcomes:

1. The discovery of several new Iranian Foreign Ministry and leadership leads.
2. Several reports on topics ranging from Ahmadi-Nejad's sentiments about his speech at Columbia University to last minute plans for the delegation to go to Latin America.
3. Several language analysts are now working with the Social Network Analysis office to better understand the connections between many of the Foreign Ministry and Leadership delegates.

(U//FOUO) Although we are still delving into all of the data gleaned from the QRC, and there are still many uncertainties, one sure thing is it would not have been nearly as successful without the collaborative spirit.